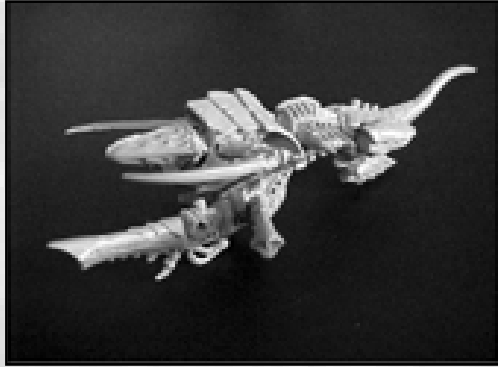


BUILDING BIO-SHIPS II

(Or – What to do with the rest of the sprue!)

By Louis Ray



My name is Louis Ray; I am married, 36 years old and live in Louisville Kentucky. I have been playing GW games since about '87 or '88 with a small group of friends. At one time or another I have played about every game that has been published by GW but the only two games I am playing right now are 40K and Battlefleet Gothic.

I am a relatively new convert to BFG. A friend and I each bought the box set and a few ships at a close-out sale at a local hobby shop about six months ago. I started with the Imperial fleet and this is what I have played most of my games with. I also have a few Space Marine ships and some Eldar but I haven't gotten around to playing these fleets as much as I would like. New projects for BFG are a Necron fleet that my wife bought me for Christmas (I haven't played with this yet) and a scratch built Tyranid fleet. I have been very excited about building the Tyranid ships and I am very pleased with the look of the ships I have built.

A few weeks ago I finally got my hands on a copy of Battlefleet Gothic mag #5. (Living on this side of the Atlantic, I get mine several months after the rest of the world). I loved the new Tyranid ships and like any other good BFG fanatic I ran right out to the local GW store and picked up two boxes of plastic Tyranid warriors. One last stop at my brother-in-law's house to pillage through his 40k Tyranid bit box and I was ready to start breeding my own hive fleet.

After a few hours filled with flying plastic chips and squirting poly-cement, I had given birth to my first Tyranid horror, onward to the next! After a few more hours, I had two small ships and a pile of left over bits. Hmm... what to do now?

I compared the size of the ships to my Imperial fleet and decided that I had a medium escort and a light cruiser. I did not want to dive into a battleship sized hiveship yet so I decided that a heavy cruiser would be my next project.

I had a few ideas about what I wanted my ships to look like, so I started fitting together the bits that I had.

One of the main things that I wanted to do with my fleet was to keep ships of the same class the same size and shape. I also wanted to make the different weapon options the same for all my ships. This meant that I had to make the ships modular with 'hard points' to mount the weapons and I needed to pick out bits to represent the different weapons available to me.

The main reason for this is to create a fleet of bio-ships with the appearance of coming from the same genetic material. Secondly, I wanted to make it easy for new opponents to identify weapon systems on my ships. No more confusion created with conversations like 'This nub on this ship is a pyro-acid battery 8, but on this ship but over here it's a launch bay.'

The first part of this article is a description of how to make a heavy cruiser body without any weapons, and then I'll go into the different weapon options available for the fleet.

To make this Tyranid heavy cruiser you will need the left over sprue parts from the BFG #6 article.

3 x Tyranid Warrior sprue

2 x Large Weapon sprue

1 x Small Weapon sprue

1 x Hormagaunt sprue

(Other bits for some weapons)

You will also need a set of modelling tools: clippers, knife, glue, sledgehammer, etc...

Step one – The Prow Carapaces

Clip out two of the back carapaces (part # 7) from the Tyranid Warrior sprue and glue them together. This creates your Prow hard point and a starting point to build your thorax on.

Step two – The Thorax Parts

Clip out the three abdomen/tail sections (part #1) from the Tyranid Warrior sprue and set them off to one side. We will cut each one in a different way and then glue it to the carapace.

Step three – The Centre Thorax

Take one of the abdomen/tail sections and cut it in half just past the last breathing spherical, (the holes in the side). Glue this section into the prow as shown below. You will also need to trim down the upper part of the centre thorax to get it to fit in place.



Step four – The Rear Thorax/Tail

Take the second of the abdomen/tail sections and cut the upper end off just past the hip joint, then file it flat.

You will also need to change the position of the tail to get this piece to look right. The best way to do this is by slowly heating the plastic. Hold it with pliers a few inches away from the heating element of an electric stove or a hotplate. After about thirty seconds, the plastic will be soft enough to bend by hand without breaking. If you have to force it to move, heat it up some more. If the tip of the tail bends down on its own, the plastic is too hot.



WARNING – Do not expose plastic model parts to an open flame! You will end up with a puddle of flaming liquid goo and could burn yourself!



Glue the rear thorax/tail section into the centre thorax as shown below and opposite.

Step five - The Lower Thorax

This step is the trickiest part of the whole ship so take your time. Use the last of the abdomen/tail sections and cut it in half just like in Step three. You will need to trim down the lower thorax, the bottom of the centre thorax and the bottom of the prow carapace to get this piece to fit in place. Use the pictures below as a guide.



After you get this piece trimmed to the right size, glue it in place. Do not worry if it is not perfect, you can fill in any gaps with Greenstuff later (and it is on the underside, out of sight).

Step six – The Engine Pods

Use the upper right leg and the upper left leg from the Tyranid Warrior sprue (part #4 and #5). Yes, yes, I know that you used all the hooves on the other ship, but we never throw away left over bits, do we!



Cut the legs at the knee joint and trim them smooth on the thigh end of the leg. Glue the right and left parts into the hip sockets in the rear thorax with the armour plates up. You may

need to trim down the pegs on the upper leg to get it to fit in the socket straight. You can stop there or add a third engine pod as shown below.

For the third engine pod you will need a third leg (right or left) and cut it at the knee as described above. You will also need to trim off the connecting peg, the meat of the thigh and the bottom of the rear thorax to get the pod to fit in place.

Step seven – Add the Spiky Bits

I planned to add some variety to my ships at this point by using different arrangements of claws /spikes/fins/whatever, to the right and left of the prow carapace. On my first ship (the first picture in the article) I used two of the Tyranid Warrior scything talons (part #3) cut at the elbow and glued into the front right and front left sockets of the carapace prow.

For my second ship (made so I could take pictures for this article) I used the other two Tyranid Warrior scything talons (part #2) and two of the small scything talons from the Hormagaunt sprue. Cut all the talons off at the elbow and glue into the sides of the carapace. The big ones mount at the rear and small ones in front.



Step eight – The Stand

The last step in making the body is to drill for the stand. The best spot that I have found for the flying stand is the centre of the lower thorax. Use a 5/64th drill bit in a pin vice.



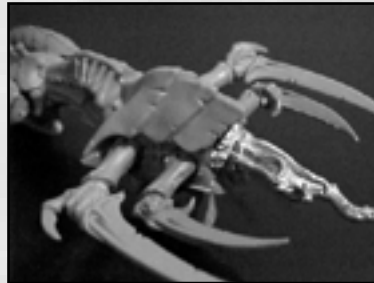
WEAPON OPTIONS FOR THE TYRANID FLEET

Prow Weapons

There are three choices for prow weapons on the Tyranid cruiser. Pick one and mount it to the front of the prow carapace.

Option #1 – Feeder Tentacles

I believe that the perfect feeder tentacle for tyranid ships is a metal spore mine miniature with the top cut off. Look at the picture below to see what I mean.



Option #2 – Massive Claws

For my set of massive claws, I used the set of rending claws from the large weapon sprue. To make these, first cut both claws from the sprue. Next, cut both thumbs off and trim the hand smooth. Cut off both hands at the wrist and glue them together. Lastly, glue them to the prow weapon mount.



Option #3 – Torpedoes

For the four point torpedo tubes, I used two of the devourers from the small weapon sprue. I cut away everything but the top of the weapon and glued them back to back just like the small ship in BFG #5. Make sure you leave enough of the material behind the devourer head to mount into the carapace.



THORAX/PORT/STARBOARD WEAPONS

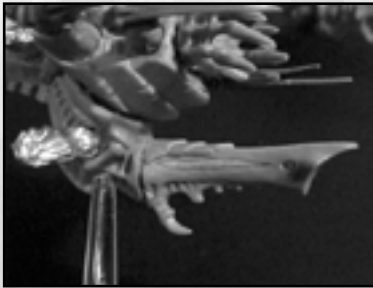
There are three weapon choices for the thorax weapon mount and the port/starboard weapons on the Tyranid cruiser. Pick one of the choices for the thorax and mount it to the front of the lower thorax. You get two more choices for the port/starboard weapon sets. Pick two

and glue them into the four thorax weapon mounts. Remember – there is a front mount set and rear mount set on each side.

Option #1 - Pyro-Acid Batteries

For my Pyro-acid batteries, I wanted to use a single device to represent each battery and not use long rows of small weapon blisters. This meant that I needed three types of pyro-acid batteries. A 45cm, strength 8 weapon for the hive ships, a 30cm strength 2 battery for the escorts and a 30cm strength 6 weapon for the cruisers

For the cruiser battery, I decided to use the deathspitter from the Tyranid warrior sprue. (Part #14) For the thorax mount, cut the deathspitter at the beginning of the barrel, just past the hand.



When using a deathspitter for the port/starboard mounts you will find that it's a little too long so just trim the barrel down.



Option #2 - Bio-Plasma Discharge

For the bio-plasma discharge spines, I used the spine fists from the small weapon sprue. Parts #7 and #10 make the best set for the port/starboard mounting but any right/left set will work. Just cut them off halfway between the elbow and the wrist and trim away the connecting cable.



If you want to use a bio-plasma discharge for the thorax weapon mount you will need to cut the end of the lower thorax down to the size of the spine fist.

Option #3 – Launch Bays

Last, but not least, are the Tyranid launch bays. I wanted them to look like a huge polyp ready to eject its brood of assault ship/creatures out into the void. The problem was that I did not have any Tyranid bits that had the right shape. After much looking and digging around in the bits box, I came to a decision. The hands from the flamers of Tzeentch were just what I needed.

Cut the arm between the wrist and the elbow. You will need to fill in the port/starboard weapon mounts with a little green putty. The arms are a little small and they do not fit tightly. If you want to use a launch bay in the thorax weapon mount, you will have to cut the end of the lower thorax down to the size of the launch bay. Cutting the hand off closer to the wrist will also help.

Go forth, multiply and devour the galaxy!

Well, the only thing left to do now is to paint your newborn horror and unleash it upon your unsuspecting opponents.

Comments on weapons for other ships

The weapon choices for the cruiser covers just about all the choices for the Tyranid fleet. The two main choices that still need bits are the 45cm, strength 8 pyro-acid battery for the hive ships and the 30cm strength 2 battery for the escorts.

For the escorts, I have been using the fleshborer from the Termagant sprue. This has the same look as the deathspitter but is quite a bit smaller. The hive ship will need something quite a bit larger, so I am planning to use the old metal barbed strangler from the metal Tyranid warrior.

The last weapon option for the fleet that I needed to pick out is the strength 2 torpedoes for the escorts and the strength 6 torpedoes for the hive ship. I plan to follow a simple pattern of one devourer per 2 points to torpedo strength. So the cruisers have two back to back, the escorts will use a single devourer and the hiveship will use three devourers arranged in a triangle pattern.

I hope that the tips and guidelines here will help and inspire you in building your own hive fleet, but I also hope that everyone will add in their own ideas and make each hive fleet a unique terror!